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EDU 402: Philosophy of Education

Background Statement

We all have expectations for ourselves when it comes to education, and the people in our lives also have their expectations for us. In my high school, the expectations were that students would work hard to try to achieve success. They wanted to see the students pass and move forward in their education. They also wanted students to be ready for further education at the college level as well as ready for future career choices. In school, there was not a strong discussion about the business world and the expectations it had for the students. Basically the expectations presented for students when dealing with the business world were shown through the tech. school where kids could learn a trade that could benefit them in the future. They were expected to still take some basic subject matter courses as well. Getting students ready for a successful future was the most important expectation presented in my school.

The expectations of school and the business world were not as pressing as my own expectations and those of my parents.My parents’ expectations were basically to try my best in each class, to not skip classes, and not to fail. They trusted me enough to know that I would do well in school.However, I had the most expectations for myself when it came to education. These expectations were considerably higher than the expectations of both my parents and teachers. I would punish myself for not doing well in school. I spent much of my time working on schoolwork and trying to move ahead. If I did not do well on something I felt like I let down my parents, even though in their minds I did well as long as I was not failing. I never got below a C on any grade, and my end of the quarter grades were generally all A’s with occasional B’s.I was strict because I wanted the best for myself much like the other people in my life. In order to succeed in life, one has to have expectations and this is what I have done for myself.

As a student, I was often prepared for all classes knowing that all teachers are unique and treat every class differently. The classrooms in high school were diverse according to teacher preference. Most classes were generally set up in rows with tiny desks. However, some were clustered into groups of four or in pairs of two. A few classes were arranged in a circle for discussions and such*.* There were decorations on the wall commonly associated with the subject area the class was studying. There was often older student work decorating the walls as well. The teacher’s desk was placed around the rooms differently, depending on the room set up. Some desks were in the corners, others in the front, one room the desk was in the back, and quite a few teachers had desks on a side.The one common theme presented in the classroom set up was the welcoming feeling and the decorations to keep students feeling comfortable instead of feeling as thought they were placed in a prison.

Much like the classroom set up the strategies teachers used in their classes were varied. Some teachers used memorization to help students better comprehend the material.Many teachers used repetition to help students remember, but this at times was hindering on the learning process because we often understood the topic the first time and had to listen to them repeat the discussion numerous times. In most of my English and history classes, we did many discussions. This was helpful to me personally because I obtained more information when it was discussed amongst the class. We often did group work and collaborative learning in our classes, which were beneficial strategies for me personally. In science and mathematics much of the classes were lectures; however, most of the teachers I had made it interactive lectures. This made it much easier to retain the knowledge gained in the lecture setting. In science for example, the class learned the concepts of DNA, then created visual structure, enforcing the lecture through interactive learning. Many of the strategies used in the classrooms of high school were helpful and diverse. It ranged from lectures to collaborative work such as fish bowls, group assignments, discussions, etc. There were strategies that were independent such as worksheets, outline note taking, tables, charts, quizzes, etc. They used many strategies to help evaluate us in various unique ways. I enjoyed the variety because it gave us many different beneficial ways of learning the material.

Due to the diverse learning experiences, I was able to get to know my teachers better and able to understand what kind of a learner they were as well. I enjoyed the majority of classes and teachers in high school. I had many memorable stories about all my teachers because they were so enthusiastic about learning and their subject areas. The story that stands out the most to me at the time though is one that I have finally begun to understand. One of the reasons I want to go into teaching is because I know there are bad teachers and teachers that really need to retire still lingering in the classroom. These teachers have lost the enthusiasm in some aspects of their teaching making their students dread the class as well. My freshman year at the University of Main in Farmington, I had been asked if I had any teachers like this. I had admitted that I did and continued to tell the story of my freshman year English teacher who I thought hated his students. I believed he needed to retire because he was no longer enthusiastic; however, I was naïve and just learning the aspects of what being a teacher was. I look back on my initial thoughts of this teacher and how I dreaded his class, and it now makes me laugh. I realize after going through the education program here what this teacher was actually doing for his class. He did not hate his students; instead he believed in his students and saw all of our potential. He had pushed us to think further knowing that we were capable of what we put our minds to. He knew we had not been challenged to our full potential in middle school and wanted us to see this. He believed in us even when we did not believe in ourselves. He challenged us to move past the first few sections of Blooms Taxonomy. He wanted us to analyze what we have read instead of just summarizing it. It was because of him that I wanted to become a teacher. After, my education here, I was able to see how this teacher was not a horrible teacher, but one who believed in his students and wanted to challenge us. I realized that as teachers we have our reasons and methods for helping students reach their full potential and this teacher succeeded in doing so.

Diversity amongst students’ ethnicities was not prevalent in my high school. There were many students who associated themselves as white/Caucasians. There were a few African American, Asian, Muslim, and Hispanic students in my school. However, out of the close to 300 students in my graduating class there were only a handful of different ethnicities. Diversity amongst socio-economic status was much different. There were a wide variety of different socio-economic statuses amongst students in the school ranging from working class, to low middle class, middle class, high middle class, and upper classes. It was easy to associate some students with different socio-economic statuses, yet there were some students who were difficult to identify. Though many students were from different backgrounds, our school was very respectful of all students and we did not discriminate on gender, socio-economic status, race, etc. The school was however structured into different types of learners and class types.

The different class types were 200-level which is CP or college prep, 300-level that is ACP or advanced college prep, honors courses, and AP or advanced placement courses. They reviewed our test scores and work from previous years to determine which level of class we would be placed in. I was often found in the 300 levels, honor classes, as well as AP courses. For the most part they did a good job placing students in accurate courses. However, my high school did not always find the learning capabilities in all students well. Often, they discredited students; however, if a student decided that he or she could perform above their expectations, the school trusted the student. With the system as it was I feel that I was able to achieve what I needed.

My background education has influenced my thoughts on teaching tremendously. It has demonstrated the distinct differences among students and classes. I have learned that at times I will need to use a variety of strategies to help students learn because they are all unique learners. I have discovered that the atmosphere and classroom help to aide my students learning and make them feel more comfortable depending on the many aspects of it. Discovering that school systems are diverse with many different class structures, I learned that I would need to be prepared and flexible for all learning environments. Due to my learning background and my education over the years, I feel as though I am ready to enter the classroom and educate my students while remaining enthusiastic, caring, compassionate, and attempting to teach my students all I can.

As a child, I grew up enjoying school and being a teacher. I had always worked with children and started babysitting at the age of nine. I had created teaching scenarios for myself and found it enjoyable to help others. Throughout school, I admired my teachers because they were so wonderful with kids and enthusiastic about teaching. There enjoyment for their subjects made me get the most I could from them. They challenged me to gain a better understanding for each subject I was learning. I found myself enthralled in the classes and enjoyed helping others understand what was going on. I had a tendency in high school to try to find teaching moments where I would help someone in my class who was struggling. I knew that I wanted to teach and help students see how brilliant they were. I want to open my students’ minds to the many possibilities they have in front of them. I want to encourage all my students and show them that there is at least one person out there who cares about them and their futures. I want to be there for my students the way many teachers were there for me challenging and encouraging me. Through this, I hope to gain the satisfaction of knowing that I helped my students and educated them so they are prepared for what is to come their way.

As a teacher to be, the idea of a superior teacher includes various characteristics. This form of teacher needs to be enthusiastic about teaching because this makes students more interested in what is being taught. Caring teachers are generally superior teachers because they allow students to see that there is someone out there who pays attention to their dreams, hopes, and success. This form of teacher should be understanding and encouraging, allowing students to see their full potential. They should be very much involved with the community by communicating with parents, going to sports games, being educated in what is going on that may not always be associated with the school but is associated with their students. Superior teachers should work collaboratively with one another to ensure that their students are receiving the best education. Superior teachers should be flexible and accepting of all students. These are the traits I plan to implement into my classroom and self. I hope to achieve these traits by remembering how rewarding being a teacher is and by seeing my students’ abilities and potential. I plan to point out when they do things correctly. I will listen and challenge them to help represent that I care. I will make sure they always have the best learning experience by working with other teachers. I know I am ready as long as I remember all these important traits of the superior teacher.

Though I have an understanding of what I wish to accomplish, I also have fears and concerns for teaching. I worry about my flexibility and if I will be able to change my lessons if I need to because students do not understand my initial way of teaching. I want to make sure I use many different learning strategies so my students can get the most out of every class; however, I must learn the many ways in which I can implement these strategies. I hope to connect with my students and remain enthusiastic. I fear being like so many teachers thirty or forty years down the road. I do not want to ever lose my enthusiasm for teaching or forget how much potential my students have. I always want to care for my students and encourage them. I fear that their late homework and not caring for my class might occur, but I must not let it stop me from caring. Experience and remembering the important traits of a teacher will help me to overcome these fears and concerns, allowing me the opportunity to work toward being the best teacher I can be.